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**TRINITY CHRISTIAN SCHOOL STUDENT-ATHLETE NAMED  
GATORADE GEORGIA BOYS CROSS COUNTRY RUNNER OF THE YEAR**

**CHICAGO** (January 30, 2017) — In its 32<sup>nd</sup> year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company, today announced **Jacob McLeod of Trinity Christian School** as its **2016-17 Gatorade Georgia Boys Cross Country Runner of the Year**. McLeod is the first Gatorade Georgia Boys Cross Country Runner of the Year to be chosen from Trinity Christian School.

The award, which recognizes not only outstanding athletic excellence, but also high standards of academic achievement and exemplary character demonstrated on and off the racecourse, distinguishes McLeod as Georgia's best high school boys cross country runner. Now a finalist for the prestigious Gatorade National Boys Cross Country Runner of the Year award to be announced in January, McLeod joins an elite alumni association of past state award-winners in 12 sports, including Lukas Verzbicas (2010-11, 2009-10 Carl Sandburg, Orland Park, Ill.), Megan Goethals (2009-10, Rochester, Rochester Hills, Mich.), Jordan Hasay (2008-09, Mission College Prep., San Luis Obispo, Calif.), Donn Cabral (2007-08, Glastonbury High School, Glastonbury, Conn.) and Chris Derrick (2007-08, Neuqua Valley, Naperville, Ill.).

The 5-foot-9, 110-pound junior won the Georgia Meet of Champions title this past season, breaking the tape in 15:09.71. McLeod also finished first at the Georgia Independent School Association AAA State Championships (15:45.12), clocking the fastest all-class time of the day and leading the Crusaders to a fourth place finish as a team. He went on to take 8th at the Foot Locker South Regional championships with a personal-best 5K time of 15:07.10, qualifying McLeod for the national Foot Locker Cross Country Championships, where he earned All-American honors by placing 15th in 15:13.80.

A member of the Senior Beta Club at his school, McLeod has volunteered locally on behalf of a VA hospital, the Salvation Army, the Dublin Kids Triathlon and the Cystic Fibrosis Foundation. He was also nominated by his teachers and received Student of the Quarter honors in association with the Oconee EMC energy cooperative. "Not only is Jacob's selection special because he is the first Georgia Independent School Association athlete to win the award, but because of the exceptional strides he made to excel at the regional and national levels," said Erik Boal, Dyestat.com editor. "His performance at Foot Locker Nationals earned him recognition as an All-American, Georgia's first such honor for a male runner in five years, and that is a testament to both his physical maturity and mental toughness."

McLeod has maintained a 4.15 weighted GPA in the classroom. He will begin his senior year of high school this fall.

The [Gatorade Player of the Year](#) program annually recognizes one winner in the District of Columbia and each of the 50 states that sanction high school football, girls volleyball, boys and girls cross country, boys and girls basketball, boys and girls soccer, baseball, softball, and boys and girls track & field, and awards one National Player of the Year in each sport. The selection process is administered by the Gatorade Player of the Year Selection Committee, which work with top sport-specific experts and a media advisory board of accomplished, veteran prep sports journalists to determine the state winners in each sport.

McLeod joins Gatorade Georgia Boys Cross Country Runners of the Year Frank Pittman (2015-16, Marist School), Reilly Friedman (2014-15, The Galloway School), Austin Sprague (2013-14, St. Pius X Catholic High School), Josh Brickell (2012-13 & 2011-12, Peachtree Ridge High School), Cody Barger (2010-11, North Hall High School), Kirubel Erassa (2009-10, Grayson High School), Taylor Lord (2008-09, Chapel Hill High School), and Zack Flickinger (2007-08, Lassiter High School) as athletes who have won the cross country award since its inception in 2007.

As a Gatorade Player of the Year, McLeod will be able to select a national or local youth sports organization to receive a grant as part of the Gatorade Play It Forward program. Every Gatorade Player of the Year state winner receives a \$1,000 grant to donate and will have the opportunity to enter for an additional \$10,000 spotlight grant by writing a brief essay explaining why their selected organization deserves additional support. 12 spotlight grants – one for each sport – will be announced throughout the year.

To keep up to date on the latest happenings, become a fan of Gatorade Player of the Year on Facebook and follow us on Twitter. For more on the Gatorade Player of the Year program, including nomination information, a complete list of past winners and the announcement of the Gatorade National Player of the Year, visit [www.gatorade.com/poy](http://www.gatorade.com/poy).

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